

New Year 2023 Heralded with Buddhist Purification Rituals

Dr Rabin Man Shakya



Portland:- Nritya Mandala Mahavihara in Portland, USA, the first, and only, Newar Vajrayana Buddhist monastery in the West, welcomed and greeted the New Year 2023 by performing Gurumandala Puja, on Sunday, Jan 1, 2023. The Puja was solemnized by Prajwal.

The New Year purification event at the Portland Baha was participated by 22 American Buddhists including the regular Gurumandala Puja teaching participants, such as, Joshua Proto, Anna Shushtrova, Adam Bidema, Gabriel Quitslund and Naveena Shakya.

Prior to the starting of the Puja, the Guruji said: "Nepal is a small country having a lot of different indigenous communities, and each ethnic community has its own New Year.

Elaborate Mha Puja (body purification) rituals are performed by the Newar people to celebrate Nepal Sambat new era."

On the occasion, a Mandala - which is a circle of cosmic diagram for ritual of realms of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,



representing various cosmic energies - was also drawn for each participant.

A Puja Sankalpa consisting of raw rice, beaten rice, dry fruit, red and yellow color powder, flowers, a little cow milk, three Gojas (small tormas), three Jajankas, three coins etc were carefully prepared for each participant who were seen sitting cross-legged at the temple.



On the occasion, participants were also given time for a short meditation. Similarly, a long pasuka (sacred thread) was used, spread and passed over onto all the New Year purification ritual participants. Jointly held by each, then

broken into individual kokha for each, it represented their unity as one Sangha.

The traditional community ceremony honored oneself and others by making offerings of purified elements and was guided by using one's own Mandala of sand.

The New Year purification event was followed by a Nepali-style dinner with champagne and wine.



Interaction with a Newah from New York Held

Portland:- An interaction program with Naresh Man Shakya, (Ph D in Physics) was organized at Portland's Nritya Mandala Mahavihara. Naresh who happens to come from Itum Bahal (Kesh Chandra Paravat Mahavihara in Kathmandu) is a Newah activist from New York.



Prior to the beginning of the interaction program, co-founder of the Mahavihara Prajwal Vajracharya gave a brief introduction of Naresh.

The interaction program was an opportunity to familiarize the Nepalese Portlanders with what is going on with the Nepal Bhasa Google Translate Project and how they can benefit from it and how they can participate in this project.

On the occasion, Naresh expressed his gratitude to the family of Nritya Mandala Mahavihara for the interaction and reception program. He extended special gratitude to Cultural Ambassador of World Newah Organization (WNO) Prajwal Vajracharya and WNO patron Daya Shakya for their contributions in preserving Newah culture, heritage and language.





"I am very impressed with the cultural activities and such immense dedication of the people involved in the Mahavihara," Naresh said.

On the occasion, WNO patron Daya who is also the president of Nepali Association of Oregon (NAO) handed over some books to Naresh as souvenir. The interaction program which was followed by a dinner was participated by Sangha members of the Mahavihara.



Hong Kong Sangha Greet Chinese New Year



Portland:- A program 'Send Tiger to Welcome Rabbit Year - End Event' was organized on Saturday, Jan 14, 2023 on zoom by the Hong Kong Buddhist Studies Association (HKBSA), an affiliate of our Portland Sangha to mark the Chinese New Year.

The event kicked off with recitation of the Refuge Prayer, followed by seven limb prayer chanted by Guru Prajwal and other participants from Hong Kong.



This was followed by meditation, Bhuddhist Bhajan and visual Charya dances on Maha Vairochana, Pancha Buddha and Zen dances.



According to Dr Tina Ho of HKBSA, "Every one was happy to welcome the Chinese new year painting exhibition by Hua Yan, Dancer Chen Jiebing, Liu Miner, Liang Ying, Lui Minxiao and Teacher. He presented the performance."

"This is the latest creation of Teacher He Manying," Dr Tina Ho added.

Nepal Bhasa Classes Kick Off

Portland:- A two-month beginners' course in conversational Nepal Bhasa and Newar culture kicked off on the zoom on Saturday, Jan 14, 2023.

The Nepal Bhasa course which is an initiative of World Newar Organization (WNO) is conducted by Daya Shakya, a Sangha member of the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara, and will be wrapped up on March 18.



The twenty hour course is designed to teach the basics of conversational Nepal Bhasa (Newar language) with an introduction to Newar culture and heritage.

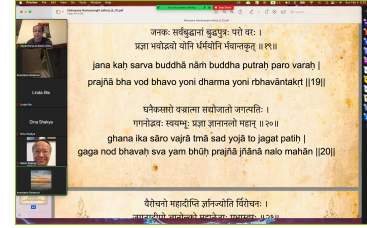
Although the course was targeted at travelers and non-resident Newars who want to rediscover their roots, the program this time was able to find participants only from within the Sangha members of the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara and Hong Kong Buddhist Studies Association.

The participants from the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara are its Sangha members Joshua Proto, Gabriel Quitslund, Adam Bidema, Anastasia Rhodrick, Glenn Cueto and Teya Desesa, while Dr Tina Ho, Chin - Chin Chang, Sophie Chang and

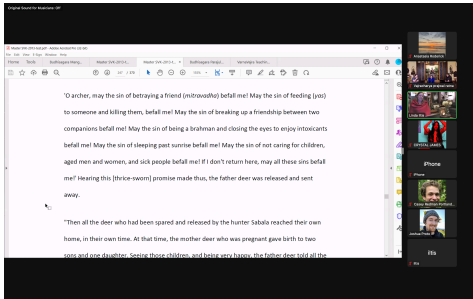
Dickon Kong took part at the Newar language course from Hong Kong Buddhist Studies Association (HKBSA).

NamSangiti and Swosthani Brata Chanting

Portland:- Mila Punhi was observed at the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara, Portland on Monday, Jan 17, 2023 by reciting Manjushree Naamsangiti.



Naamsangiti was recited in person at the temple and also on Zoom.



It is a coincidence that Swosthani Brata, a month-long Hindu festival, also starts in Nepal from the day of Mila Purnima.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Dr Linda Iltis from Washington, who has done her Ph D on Swosthani Brata, informed the participants that a month long fasting and story telling about

During Swosthani brata, the devotees, especially women, wearing red color sari take a dip into Shali river in Sankhu in the morning and fast for a month worshipping Goddess Swosthani, Dr Iltis added.

The Swosthani Brata chanting, in English, led by Dr Iltis will be continued for a month everyday on the zoom until the Day of Si Punhi on Feb 5.



Talk Program on Various Buddhist Deities

Portland:- A talk program on the religious significance of various Buddhist deities was organized by Hong Kong Buddhist Studies Association (HKBSA) on Zoom, Saturday, Jan 28, 2023.



The interaction program which was conducted by Guruji Prajwal Vajracharya. Divided into two parts: (1) Compassion deities, semi-wrathful deities and wrathful deities, and (2) Yogini Mandala and its connection with Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava).

Addressing the Zoom gathering, Guruji

Prajwal said: "Avlokiteshvara, Manjushree and Tara are compassionate deities in Buddhism. Avlokiteshvara is a compassionate Bodhisattva who hears the cries of sentient beings and who works tirelessly to help those who call upon his name."



Laying emphasis on the religious importance of wrathful deities like Vajrapani and Mahakala and semi-wrathful deities like Vajrayogini and Vajravarahi, the Guruji said that all these deities are very important in Vajrayana Buddhism and these deities are working for the protection and wellbeing of the sentient beings.



Speaking at the second part of the interaction on Guru Rinpoche, Vajracharya said that Padmasambhava is respected as second Buddha in Vajrayana Buddhism. Guru Rinpoche had been initiated in Nepal by Hungkaravajra, and visited several parts of Nepal Mandala over a three year period. The interaction also focused on iconography of the deities and Charya dances related to them.

Meanwhile, Dharani recitation was held on Zoom every week on Tuesday by the Mahavihara. Similarly, Charya Giti singing practice was also organized virtually once a week every Friday. Likewise, Buddhist Bhajan chanting and Sadhana practice were also held weekly in person at the Mahavihara and also remotely on a regular basis on each Wednesday.

	na pāpa riṇā na pūyariṇā / tribhuvana eka sworūpī / dhu// No sins no merit / three realms only one nature
	sarva vikalpa dighnāśanī devī anuttara jāāna bara dāyani // all doubt cuts through goddess profound knowledge bestows
	ratna naupura dhari odhiyana pithe/ Jeweled ankle bells wearing (come from) cremation grounds
	sri bidhyadhari devī suranara bandhita// splendorous holder of knowledge goddess all creatures bound to
	jagata anukampa kripa guna devī //dhu// all being love and compassion virtue knowledge devi
	dusta mara bigna nashini devī // dhu// bad enemy fear cut through devi

